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News & Updates: May 2022

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Recovering America's Wildlife Act: Bill offers opportunity to fund threatened wildlife



Audubon of Kansas Board member, Michael Donnelly, wrote an opinion piece that was published in the Kansas Reflector. It talks about the importance of the federal bill H.R. 2733 Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA). This bipartisan bill will provide additional funding for conservation in Kansas and throughout the United States.

The bill comes at an opportune time as scientists recently reported that we have [3 billion fewer birds](#) in North America since 1970. RAWA not only protects birds, but it will also provide funding to conserve mammals and other vertebrates, insects and other invertebrates, and plants.

Thank Senators [Jerry Moran](#) and [Roger Marshall](#) and Representative [Sharice Davids](#) who have sponsored the bill.

Ask Representatives [Tracey Mann](#), [Jake LaTurner](#), and [Ron Estes](#) to support wildlife in Kansas and landowners who engage in conservation by backing Recovering America's Wildlife Act, H.R. 2773.

[Read Michael's the article in the Kansas Reflector](#)

Rail Surveys will help us measure the impact of our wetland

improvement project at Hutton



Rails are small, secretive waterbirds found in wetlands. They are difficult to see and they vocalize infrequently. Some birders call them 'invisible'! The two most common species, Virginia Rail and Sora, prefer dense vegetation. Their bodies are compressed laterally (left to right) so that they can slip through small gaps in the vegetation. Some believe this body shape is where the saying "Skinny as a Rail!" originated.

Rails are related to American Coots, which are much easier to see. These large, duck-sized birds have dark plumage and white beaks.



Executive Director, Jackie Augustine, is conducting surveys for these secretive waterbirds at Hutton Niobrara Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary. The surveys call for 5 min of listening followed by 30 second playbacks of the birds' calls and 30 seconds of listening. The birds are more likely to vocalize after hearing their call played; however, playbacks should not be used routinely or 'for fun' as it causes disturbance and distracts the birds from their normal activities. Three surveys are conducted two weeks apart during May and the first half of June. So far, Jackie has detected 15 Virginia Rails and 7 Sora using the wetlands at Hutton.

In the next year or two, two small dams will be added to two areas in the wet meadow along the Niobrara River at Hutton. These dams will prevent the water from draining and spread it out over a larger area. We expect these dams to increase the amount of wetland habitat and increase the population size of both Virginia Rails and Sora.

Photo above: Rail Survey Point #4 marked with a t post.

Photo right: Sora by [David Rintoul](#)

Learn more
about Virginia Rails

Learn more
about Sora

Learn more
about American Coots

Binocular Backpack Kick-Off!
Join us June 3 at 7pm at Stevens County Library

We're excited to be kicking off our bird and butterfly backpack initiative at Stevens County Library in Hugoton Kansas! The backpacks will be

presented to the library and include one adult pair of binoculars, two children's pairs of binoculars, guides for identifying birds and butterflies, and an map showing where to find wildlife in the county.

At 7pm on Friday, June 3, Jackie will talk about how to use the binoculars and provide tips for watching birds and butterflies. The backpacks will be available for check out in the coming weeks. Funding from Audubon of Kansas members and Chickadee Checkoff. Chickadee Checkoff supports the dissemination of backpacks in southwest Kansas.

Please join us Friday, at 7pm, at the Stevens County Library, 500 South Monroe Street in Hugoton. Refreshments will be served.



This summer, we will be having a capital campaign to support the purchase of backpacks to place in libraries throughout Kansas - stay tuned for opportunities for you to contribute through volunteering and fund raising!

Chapter Spotlight: Smoky Hills Audubon hosting a native plant sale and hayrack ride on National Prairie Day - June 4



Celebrate National Prairie Day at Smoky Hills Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary on Saturday June 4th from 9am until noon. Hay Rack Ride and Plant Sale!

Address: 2500 W Stimmel Rd, Salina, KS 67401

Horticulturist Scott Vogt is the Executive Director at the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains in Hesston, KS, and will be on hand to answer questions. At the Dyck Arboretum he has worked with native plant displays, consultations, designs and education

since 1997. He is an author of numerous articles and a frequent contributor to the Arboretum's weekly blog, 'Prairie Notes'. He has worked to expand FloraKansas Native Plant Days, the largest native plant sale in the state (April, September), and is an advocate for "cultivating transformative relationships between people and the land". Some native perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees will be available for purchase.

Our hay rack ride will be available to allow you to tour portions of the sanctuary. 2.5 miles of hiking trails await the adventurous. Spend a day among the wildflowers!

Text from [Smoky Hills Audubon Society's Facebook page](#)

AOK shares favorite walks, hikes and birding spots!



Address: 2500 W Stimmel Rd, Salina,
KS 67401

Smoky Hill Audubon Harold Lear Wildlife Sanctuary

Although this sanctuary only covers 67 acres, there are 2.5 miles of trails and a variety of habitats to explore. A pond hosts ducks and waterbirds as long as it remains ice free. Grasslands and forests add to the habitat diversity. 203 species of birds have been reported at the site. If you go, look for Green Herons along the edges of the pond and Red-headed Woodpeckers adjacent to the prairie.

There is even a handicap accessible, protected photo blind, a Port A Potty on site, and picnic tables. Plan on spending the day!

Contact AOK!

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